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Inaugural Dissertation

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By

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Of Savannah. Georgia. -

1825.

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The embarassment & difficulty of selecting a subject for a medical Thesis amidst the variety which must attract the attention of the student who has been engaged in preparing himself as a candidate for a degree, & whose knowledge of them is principally confined to what he has been able to derive from books & lectures, can only be equalled by that of treating the subject he has been fortunate enough to decide on, in a manner most suitable to the occasion, & the best which attending circumstances will admit. Of this embarassment it has been my lot to experience no inconsiderable share, & after much hesitation I have mentioned on a subject involved in much obscurity, but not the less interesting to the medical profession. Although I cannot hope to present any thing novel or original,

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I trust I shall not fail to show at least that I have endeavoured to understand the views which have been taken of it by those who have turned their attention to it more particularly, & have had ample opportunity & ability for its investigation; & that I have not been altogether inattentive to the cases which have come under my notice during my attendance at the Alms-house & Hospital.

The contemplation of humanity while labouring under any of the innumerable forms of disease with which it is beset, must ever be a source of pain to the mind of sensibility & sympathy. Who can mark without emotion the blighted form of youth & beauty, the cheek which but yesterday was flushed with health, & red with the rose in freshness, now pale & wan; the eye which sparkled with the fire of youth, & beamed forth

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with unclouded brightness, now closed & sunken; the lips which gave utterance to the merry sounds of wit & humour, or the tender voice of love, now silent & livid; the bosom which beat high with joy & hope, now oppressed with grief & despair? Who can contemplate such a spectacle, without dropping a tear over the frailty of human excellence & loveliness? To witness such scenes must ever affect even the stoutest; but every day's experience is continually presenting them to our view, & teaches us to consider them the necessary concomitants of the frail tenement we inhabit. We are consoled in a measure by the reflection that the most beautiful & lovely form is the creature of a moment, that it must necessarily soon fade away, & be converted into those gross materials of which it is composed; that there is an immortal &

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immaterial principle within to which it owes all its excellence. & which will be the same after this is no more have crumbled into mother earth. Yet this strange character we are enabled often to hear the assertion of the very worst evils which attend a diseased & imbecile. But surely we should disdain not content with ravaging the body & laying waste some of the most beautiful & good in nature obliterating its immediate influence to the mind itself, destroying reason & converting an empire & prostrating to a most deplorable state the faculties which alone make man, in reason & directed by a sound judgement, constitute man the noblest work of the creation & immediately distinguish him above all other orders of creation, we feel as if we were deprived of our all & finished our point, & as if time were no

more light or reason to cast over the face of the pure time. Happy for immediate manner there is shown in these commendations, yet one resource to which we may look with no small degree of confidence. It is this, that applauds which in the most trying scenes. The ethereal sort that pervaded mankind in which many men may have been indeed from their most untutored state. Still will man be stationary in the world, the great Lord "Let there be light" which that extends its friendly aspect not only over the cares of the lowly, but to the vision of the minds of the children of men!"

Could man have remained in that animal, simple state, confined merely to the wants which nature doubtless intended for him, in which the plain, simple, could it have been content to breathe the pure air of the mountain, instead of the impure

the atmosphere of the city, demanding where the world & buried in the point for his nourishment & the numerous horse for his divert in would unquestionably some have been accompanied with a host of diseases which are worse the disease of his race. This from trivial in mortal disease would have drawn upon the multitudes of the desirous & his mind unfolded in passion would have remained calm & undisturbed in case.

Thus we perceive no disease to which the preceding observations is more applicable than that which is the subject of our present consideration. It has augmented continually in the progress of luxury & refinement, & is the consequence of the introduction of a poison which inevitably attends their march. The baneful effects which have resulted from the intemperate use

of account should have been too frequently adverted to to render any very elaborate disquisition on the subject necessary at this time. [illegible] will [illegible] but it renders the system [illegible] to baffle the efforts of practitioners in their treatment. The [illegible] which [illegible] of the same peculiar [illegible] sufficient to [illegible] the [illegible] & the system [illegible] state [illegible] invariably occasioned [illegible] may [illegible] it into

ation a wound a fracture or an [illegible] [illegible] irritation [illegible] can be the means of [illegible] [illegible] all to know.

The persons who are the subjects of this lecture are those who are addicted to the use of alcoholic stimuli to an intemperate degree either occasionally or habitually. I mean pre-eminently the latter.

The effect of these stimuli on the system is to elevate it above the natural standard & this elevation is always followed by a corresponding depression equally far below the standard as soon as the excitation has ceased. Then there are instances of the above description [illegible] persons [illegible] to stimulate more freely than usual for a longer or shorter time, & then return to their usual habits either abandoning entirely the use of stimuli or indulging in their more modera

stroke the system will be in a state of depression extremely inviting to disease & they are seized with a train of symptoms the most distressing nature which are followed in the disease in question.

The symptoms which have been observed prior to its appearance & which are the immediate precursors of the disease are such as remote great derangement in the digestive apparatus, together with all the slight indispositions of the countenance formerly mentioned. There is a languor & paleness of look with an expression of anxiety. There is indigestion, oppression at the pit of the stomach, nausea & sometimes retching & vomiting. The bowels sometimes closer at other times loose & irritated, together with pains & uneasiness in the head. The tongue is furred but generally moist. The pulse is variable, generally more

patient then rational but easily irritable.
The drive is sometimes not so very violent,
and, moreover, not a natural one. There is
also most commonly a trembling of the hands
& also of the head. The mind often manifests
a lowering from the commencement. The patient
imagines he hears strange noises, manifests
great concern for his external safety & extreme
restless & unable to sleep so that it is with
great difficulty he can be induced to undressing

As the disease advances the delirium in-
creases & becomes constant night & day & the
patient is incessant. The delirium in
the cases sometimes alternates more or less
with insanity. The patient occasionally
jumps his bed to pieces & throws it about
the room. He is often seized with a paroxysm
of inconceivable strength, which however are
succeeded by great prostration & lan-

[illegible] [illegible] the mind which is [illegible] limited. It is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

cool & clammy, sometimes covered with copious sweat. The pulse is exceedingly small & rapid & the countenance dull. Pain is without remission, accompanied in some cases, which soon terminate life, in intractable diarrhœa, with tenesmus & a lady, followed by death.

This disease comes sometimes with violence in three days or a week, sometimes with more moderation, for a longer time, partaking some what of a remittent form.

There is no part of the subject which is involved in more obscurity & which is less understood than, that which relates to the precise state of the system or the proximate cause, which gives rise to the various symptoms & appearances. We are informed by Dr. Ottow in his essay on the subject, that when the disease first made its appearance in the neighbourhood where he resided;

in consequence of the similarity of the symptoms to those in idiopathic pneumonia, it was considered as essentially the same in the general its constituents. A cold, dry, in a little the use of inflammations of the chest & it was accompanied, & requiring copious repletions, venesections, purging &c. as usually recommended in that disease. The days that Rundell was at Cape Town & treated it accordingly, but from the amount of deaths which he met with & the very great success with which the disease was treated by another set of practitioners who had recent proven experience to take a different view of it, & who pursued a very different plan of treatment he was induced to change his opinions. & at last fell upon the same practice.

The resemblance which this disease had in many respects both to pneumonia & cholera,

might very well have induced Dr. Gerard at first sight to consider this intoxication to have been but indeed that the reaction which sometimes occurs to "counteract the effects of the" first excitation, constitutes the one more point of difference in the symptoms which generally attend, which may very well assist in determining the diagnosis according to Dr. Gerard. The stupide which we call "delirium tremens" does not commence so suddenly as d'emblée. But it was often we learnt that the stupide had been coming on for some time. There is not the intolerance of light which generally attends the latter. And the tremors which usually accompany the former, are seldom observed in d'ne vitis. The state of the mind although sometimes resembling that in genuine delirium is generally different. The mind is usually rather in a distracted state

invade affairs. & establishes great immediately with respect to every idea & thing & does not retain the remembrance even of what has immediately passed. The author just referred to likewise observes, that Dr Gardner thinks there is something peculiar in the motion of the hands in this disease. "as if the patient might with suspect idiots be searching for things & occasionally catching & throwing them."

The observations which have been made in this disease do not prove as satisfactorily as might be desired what is exactly the combination of circumstances in which the phenomena appear. Cases of disease have been observed in various parts of the world. The brain & its membranes the parts which consider & decide first the attention, have been found in a state of tumefaction the vessels being congested. This op-

[illegible] are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] of the disease is [illegible] rather be a consequence of it occurring immediately [illegible] the death. [illegible] [illegible] the symptoms which [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], except at that time.

The [illegible] of the [illegible] are [illegible] [illegible] in various states of disease. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] & [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] & sometimes [illegible], at other times [illegible].

These [illegible] are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible] & immediate use of [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] indeed sufficient to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in all the [illegible] but [illegible] more immediately & [illegible] concerned in the [illegible] of the attendant symptoms. It must be [illegible] that the [illegible] & [illegible] of these symptoms would [illegible]

face with that of the condition in which the
[illegible] are found & where a fatal termination
exists. The same phenomena would be con-
sidered. In the previous paragraph we have the
[illegible] matter consideration to make to ap-
pearance in [illegible] cases are [illegible] to an
[illegible] use of stimuli & in some [illegible] the [illegible]
[illegible] to [illegible] & when they have either
[illegible] we [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] in this [illegible] [illegible] of
[illegible] medications have been observed after death,
in some the [illegible] were found in the same
diseased state & who never had an attack of
[illegible] delirium.

From these considerations we cannot
but acknowledge that the [illegible] which
are [illegible] on administration of this [illegible]
do not sufficiently account for the phenom-
ena observed & we must look elsewhere for a

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Preface.

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[illegible]

[illegible] that of [illegible] & it was no uncommon [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] that he [illegible] it in several

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] & alimentary canal, [illegible] in these cases & [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] be attended with [illegible] consequence [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], & debilitating [illegible] on the [illegible] system. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] will be [illegible] an indiscriminate use of

[illegible]

[illegible]

Indeed if we find in the whole ex-
[illegible] to be very great [illegible] to the
[illegible] stages in which [illegible]
[illegible] & in
[illegible] the relative number of [illegible], it is sufficient to find the [illegible] with the above-
[illegible] & in the [illegible] stated [illegible] must be
substituted.

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will be found to answer in every case.

It is only by attending to the state of the system, watching the symptoms as they arise, & adapting remedies to the circumstances of each case, that any man can hope to practice with success.

And he who is thus careful with respect to these circumstances, & pursues this just & philosophic course, will alone reap the well-earned fruits of his exertions, & be an ornament to his profession, & an useful citizen of his Country. — — — — — — — — —

End.